

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks



MISSION—

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, through its employees and citizen commission, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks, and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations.

DEPARTMENT GOALS—

- Manage with a focus on ecological systems to reflect the diversity of all wildlife and their habitats, while maintaining our commitment to Montana's hunting and fishing heritage.

- Provide increased opportunities for public enjoyment of fish, wildlife, and parks resources, while maintaining our commitment to improve landowner-sportsperson-department relations.

- Achieve a quality, financially sound state parks system.

- Elevate the importance of public education and participation in all program areas to afford citizens the opportunity to better understand, appreciate, and make informed decisions about our natural and cultural resources.

- Create a work environment where a diverse workforce can focus on FWP priorities under healthy, satisfying, and caring conditions.

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS COMMISSION—

STAN MEYER, *Chairman*, Great Falls

DAVID W. SIMPSON, *Vice Chairman*, Hardin

DARLYNE DASCHER, *Fort Peck*

CHARLES R. DECKER, *Libby*

DALE TASH, *Dillon*

- FWP's Region One Citizen Advisory Committee has helped FWP become more connected to the people it serves. The 11 peer-selected members of the committee meet regularly with FWP staff and provide advice on issues that affect constituents. In turn, these advisors report back to the public on ways to create better information exchange.

- A citizen committee charged with recommending measures to improve black bear hunting regulations in northwestern Montana has made recommendations designed to reduce

employees spending increased time with five Havre elementary school classes as part of FWP's increasingly popular Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs program.

- Over 100 biologists, game wardens, and conservation specialists joined in implementing a continuing expansion of hunting access to private land. The Block Management Program grew from 883 individual areas encompassing approximately 7 million acres in 1996 to 942 areas encompassing over 7.5 million acres in 1997.

...providing increased Opportunities

the number of young female black bears harvested and the number of bears harvested illegally. FWP will consider these recommendations during the upcoming 1998/99 season-setting process.

- A formalized public fishing access plan on the lower Ruby River was implemented. This community-grown vision culminated years of work to provide angling access on this southwestern Montana stream. The access sites were prepared for opening with parking areas, signs, and fencing, and a cateraker was hired to maintain the sites, work with area landowners, collect use data, and assist with weekly reports.

- A fishing pond designated "just for kids" is in the initial stages of development at Havre. Growing enthusiasm related to angling in the area is likely the result of FWP



DUANE MITCHELL



DOONNA CASIPRELLI

- FWP's fourth annual "Becoming an Outdoors Woman" workshop was held at Beaver Creek Park south of Havre last summer. Fifty participants from north-central Montana and beyond attended the workshop.

where the money comes from

budgeted, fiscal year
REVENUES 1998

• LESS THAN 1% OF FWP'S TOTAL BUDGET COMES FROM THE STATE GENERAL FUND

HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES

This includes all license sale revenue, interest earnings, and other miscellaneous revenue. Non-resident sales account for nearly two-thirds of FWP's total license revenue.

69.3 %
\$35,367,043

FEDERAL REVENUES

FWP receives federal monies for: aid in fish and wildlife restoration efforts; for parks development and maintenance; for boating safety, education, and regulation; and other programs. In FY98 nearly 90% of FWP's federal assistance, or approximately \$10 million, was apportioned to Montana for fish and wildlife restoration through the Pittman-Robertson (P-R) and Wallop-Breaux (W-B) programs. P-R monies are derived from an excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition, hand guns, and certain archery equipment. W-B monies are derived from an excise tax on fishing equipment and electric trolling motors, a portion of the federal fuels tax, and import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure boats.

The balance of the federal monies comes from various federal sources and is used for other purposes, including parks projects.

19.2 %
\$9,775,847

OTHER STATE REVENUES

Other state revenue sources include: fees for state park use; a portion of the state's lodging facilities use tax; a small percentage of the state fuel tax; interest earnings from coal severance tax receipts; and other miscellaneous revenue sources.

10.7 %
\$5,472,941

GENERAL FUND

State tax dollars.

0.8 %
\$416,574

TOTAL REVENUES: \$51,032,405

where the money goes

budgeted, fiscal year
EXPENDITURES 1998

FWP SPENDS ITS MONEY TWO WAYS:

- OPERATIONS for day-to-day management of fish, wildlife, and parks resources.
- CAPITAL for major repair and maintenance of FWP properties, for renovation and construction of facilities, and to protect and enhance critical habitats.

parks: operating — \$4,947,401
capital — \$1,803,750
total — \$6,751,151
% of total — 13.2

The Parks Division is responsible for development, maintenance, and operation of all state parks and affiliated sites with an objective of providing diverse recreational opportunities while preserving important historical and cultural resources within Montana.

operating — \$6,918,267
capital — \$3,810,000
total — \$10,728,267
% of total — 21.0

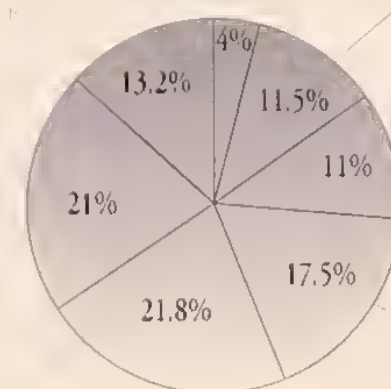
The Wildlife Division is responsible for managing all species of big game, upland game birds, waterfowl, furbearers, non-game birds, and endangered wildlife in the state.

operating — \$6,434,365
capital — \$4,708,309
total — \$11,142,674
% of total — 21.8

The Fisheries Division is responsible for the management and perpetuation of Montana's fish and other aquatic resources.

conservation education: operating — \$2,015,280
% of total — 4.0

The Conservation Education Division acts as a clearinghouse for disseminating information on FWP activities and news items to the media and conducts a variety of educational and recreation-safety programs.



FWP total:

operating — \$40,366,846
capital — \$10,665,559
total — \$51,032,405

enforcement: operating — \$5,884,236
% of total — 11.5

The Enforcement Division is responsible for enforcing all the fish and game laws of Montana, FWP rules, and FWP Commission regulations. Division personnel also enforce state boating and snowmobile rules and state park regulations, as well as private property laws and regulations as they pertain to hunting and fishing.

field services: operating — \$5,554,961
% of total — 11.0

The Field Services Division is responsible for FWP's lands program and construction projects, as well as its Block Management (public hunting access) and landowner-sportsperson's relations programs.

management & finance: operating — \$8,612,337
capital — \$ 343,500
total — \$8,955,837
% of total — 17.5

The Helena-based director's office staff makes major policy and administrative decisions. Regional supervisors handle on-the-ground implementation of policies and programs. The Administration and Finance Division is responsible for accounting, purchasing, personnel, data processing, and administration of FWP's licensing functions.

When you think about Montana's fish, wildlife and parks, what comes to mind? They are certainly among the finest in the nation. However, many folks I talk to fear the opportunity to enjoy them may be lost, slowly but steadily. Some wait and worry. Others are stepping forward and it is making a difference.

With your financial support, we now have over 100,000 acres in conservation easements to protect critical habitat; hunting access agreements with 942 landowners, covering 7.5 million acres; 93 completed stream and lake improvement projects;

improved access and visitor services at a number of popular state parks.

Many Montanans also shared increasingly of their time and talents. The number of state parks volunteers grew from 230 in 1993 to more than 1,130 today. In 1997, 10 stalwart volunteers were honored for having taught two generations of Montana hunters over the entire 40-year history of our Hunter Education Program. And more than 300 Montanans have now

stepped up to teach fishing and aquatic education at clinics and special events through the Family Fishing Adventures Program. Enactment of a "Free Fishing Day" will now encourage entire families to participate in this lifelong activity.

Other volunteers helped monitor watercraft on lakes in the Flathead Valley, served on groups that led to the purchase and lease of five fishing access sites on the Ruby River, and helped develop

hunting and fishing opportunities for the continued success of our private land hunter access program.

Using appropriate technology also is helping...Computers are now aiding greatly in enforcement efforts.

Mobile laser shooting ranges are providing exciting shooting opportunities for young and old. FWP's award-winning Internet web site is reaching people far and wide. Approval of a new automated licensing system promises to make purchasing hunting and fishing licenses easier beginning in the year 2000.

Can we maintain our traditions? We can...with your help!!! Montana—it's our way of life.

Pat Graham

Patrick J. Graham
Director—Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

- Cooperative habitat enhancement efforts paid big dividends for waterfowl during the spring and summer of 1997. The population estimate of 1.9 million breeding ducks in the surveyed portion of Montana, east of the Continental Divide, reflected a nearly 72% increase from 1996 and set an all-time record.

- Two North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant

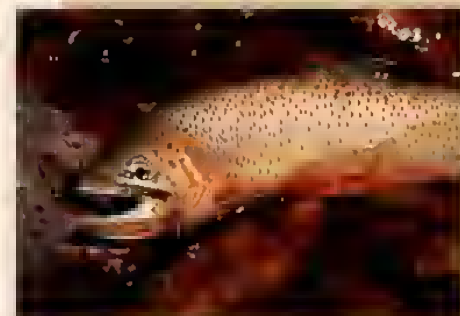
restoration efforts throughout northwest Montana, and management continues to emphasize bull trout and native fish restoration. A decision on whether bull trout will be listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act will be made by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as early as June 1998.

- Forty-five fisheries habitat improvement projects were approved for funding

- Conservation easements continue to be FWP's principal tool for protecting valuable wildlife habitat through the Habitat Montana program. In 1997, conservation easements were used to protect wildlife habitat on 33,583 acres of land, including 10,829 on the Hirsch property near Wisdom, 6,045 acres on the Bauxham property at Glendive, 8,908 acres on the Hirsch property near Anaconda, 5,359 acres of the Bolin and

towns on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. There were three releases totaling 23 kits. The second release on September 24 was witnessed by 100 area school children. Innovations related to the releases included daylight releases and assisted dispersal by releasing just a few on each prairie dog town. Spotlight surveys to monitor ferret movements are continuing.

- Habitat restoration efforts in the Blackfoot River drainage, primarily for bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout, continued to gain national attention



CUTTHROAT TROUT

In striving to reach our goals we are...

Managing with a focus

proposals were successfully submitted by FWP, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. Grants totaling \$937,000 were received. Approximately \$397,770 of the total will be used primarily for projects on private land in two Prairie Pothole Joint Venture areas (PPJV) in northeastern Montana.

- FWP completed a water lease agreement with a water right owner on Mud Heion Creek in the upper Yellowstone River basin to provide instream flows to improve spawning conditions for Yellowstone cutthroat trout in the creek and, ultimately, to increase cutthroat numbers in the Yellowstone River. FWP has obtained nine water leases through voluntary agreements with water right owners under the water leasing statute approved by the 1989 Legislature.

- Bull trout recovery efforts continued throughout 1997. A draft restoration plan being developed by an interdisciplinary group appointed by Governor Racicot is nearly finished. Local watershed groups and management agencies have been implementing habitat

through Montana's Future Fisheries Improvement Program in 1997. These projects included over \$2 million in habitat improvements at a cost of \$685,600 in license dollars, the rest in matching funds. Projects funded through the program will enhance spawning and rearing habitats, improve riparian vegetation and bank cover, reduce loss of fish into irrigation diversions, enhance stream flows, and restore fish passage.

- FWP fisheries personnel in eastern Montana, along with 50 volunteers, collected a record 132 million eggs from spawning walleyes this spring at Fort Peck Reservoir. More than 1.2 million fingerlings and 52 million fry were returned to the reservoir. Twenty other waters received these walleyes.



COYOTE HUNT

DEER MANAGEMENT UPDATE 1997

Hunting regulations become more restrictive

The past winter's heavy snows came early, stayed late, and were the worst on record in many areas of Montana. Northwestern, southwestern, and northeastern portions of the state were especially hard hit. Survival of fawns was low in those areas.

Deer hunting regulations in 1997 were more restrictive than in recent years in response to declines in both mule deer and white-tailed deer in certain parts of Montana. While the restrictions primarily affected mule deer hunting, regulations for hunting white-tailed deer in some areas also were more conservative with the goal of reducing overall harvests.

In an effort to reduce the mule deer buck harvest and to address the particularly pressing concern for improved buck/doe

based on accomplishments to date and the landowner-FWP alliances that are being built for the benefit of fish and wildlife. These efforts have now restored habitat in 23 streams and affected more than 200 miles of stream and wetland habitat.

- FWP hired a TIP-Mont (Crimestoppers) program coordinator and increased program publicity, encouraging the public to report wildlife violations. In 1996, the latest year for which complete information is available, 666 reports of violations led to the imposition of \$52,295 in fines, \$13,700 in restitution, and \$5,950 in rewards to persons reporting crimes. The violations' hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges were suspended for a total of 98 years, with one lifetime suspension. TIP-Mont has now been expanded to include state park violations.

ratio in southwestern Montana, the FWP Commission adopted a requirement that ALL hunters who purchase a Deer A license have it validated for a specific area of the state.

The goal of these changes was to significantly decrease overall harvest of deer so that populations can increase when environmental conditions promote better fawn survival. Initial indications from 1997 harvest data indicate that, due to a combination of factors, including low deer numbers and mild weather during most of the 1997 season, deer harvest were down considerably in most of southwestern and northwestern Montana.

FWP is now in the process of setting new objectives that will guide management of Montana's deer in the future.

WHIRLING DISEASE UPDATE 1997

Research Hits High Gear

Montanans' spirits were buoyed in 1997 by the discovery that Arctic grayling and bull trout are resistant to whirling disease. The research team further established that Yellowstone and westslope cutthroat trout are prone to infection, yet are slightly less susceptible than rainbow trout to contracting a fatal dose of whirling disease.

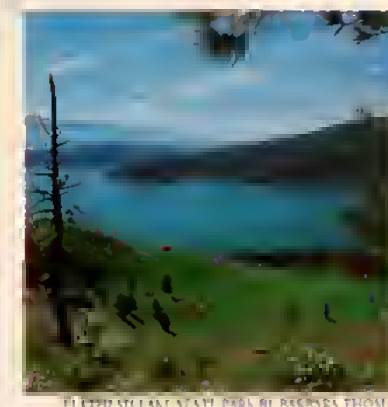
These continuing discoveries—in conjunction with extensive research being conducted on Montana's wild trout waters and in Montana laboratories—are helping FWP fisheries managers to recognize a broad spectrum of whirling disease vulnerability that includes how, when, and where wild trout and the parasite interact. FWP's ultimate hope is to develop a way to naturally segregate young wild trout—perhaps in natal tributaries—from the whirling disease parasite when the parasite is most abundant and active.

As 1997 drew to a close, almost 60 bodies of water—about 20% of all sample sites—have been found to be holding wild fish with varying degrees of whirling disease infection. None of Montana's state, federal, or private hatcheries is infected with whirling disease. Major waterways that are still believed to be whirling disease free include: the Bighorn; Stillwater; Boulder (of the Yellowstone); Gallatin; East Gallatin; Missouri below Cascade; and the stretch from Headwaters to Canyon Ferry Reservoir; Tejon; Bitterroot; Flathead; Kootenai; Marias; Big Spring Creek; and the Madison River above Quake Lake.



OF VAN NIET USA

...working to keep our State parks sound



FLATHEAD LAKE STATE PARK BY BOBBY THOMAS

- Forty acres adjacent to Lake Mary Ronan State Park were acquired from Plum Creek Timber Co. in 1997. This will help provide expanded access to this popular fishing lake.

- Crews completed phase 1 of construction at Big Arm State Park, including development of a safer highway entrance to the park; a new boat ramp, boat dock, and parking area; a complete park boundary survey; new showers accessible for people with disabilities; and nature and horse trails.

- At Flathead Lake State Park, FWP worked in partnership with local communities to install

playground equipment, establish nature trails, and construct a group picnic shelter at the Wayfarer/Harry Horn unit.

- The River's Edge Trail through Giant Springs State Park was expanded and the Rainbow Falls overlook was completely rebuilt. Work continues on the federal

Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, which will occupy a site inside the park.

- FWP and the Billings-based Western Heritage Center received a \$30,000 Museum Leadership Grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services to develop a computer web site for an electronic field trip to Pictograph Cave and Chief Menly-Coups state parks.

- FWP, in partnership with Garfield County and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, reconstructed the last four miles of county road leading to Hell Creek State Park. This project

will ensure all-weather access to this popular state park and the surrounding C.M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge in this rugged, remote area of eastern Montana.

- 1997 marked the seventh year of the Parks Division's statewide volunteer program and each year the numbers soar to new heights! In 1997, volunteers donated over 41,422 hours of time, compared with 35,460 hours in 1996, to assist with services at state parks.

- 1997 was another banner year for the internship program in state parks. Thirty interns worked a total of 12,413 hours.

...stressing the importance of public education

- FWP provided copies of *WILD OUTDOOR WORLD* youth magazine, published in cooperation with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, to all fourth graders in Montana public schools.

- FWP's two mobile DART (simulated hunting situation) Shooting Centers were used extensively throughout the state to reach thousands of Montanans with an enjoyable shooting experience. Participants were instructed in firearms and archery safety, proper shot placement, and hunter ethics as they took part in this fun, yet educational, activity.

- FWP, in cooperation with the Boone & Crockett Club and representatives from Montana Agriculture in the Classroom, developed a teacher's guide for use with FWP's video documentary, *LANDSCAPE*, focusing on grasslands and grazing themes.

- Game wardens have been active throughout the year in speaking to sporting groups, hunter education instructors, Boy's State delegates, and the public regarding hunter behavior. FWP has initiated a statewide focus

group to address hunter behavior problems.

- FWP's Family Fishing Adventures Program expanded in 1997 to include 40 Montana schools in the national



JOHN A. GUN

acclaimed Hooked on Fishing. Not on Drugs program. Fishing tackle loaner sites were established in each Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs community to provide free loan of fishing equipment to children and their families, newly trained volunteer fishing instructors and other educators conducted over 200 aquatic education courses and fishing clinics, reaching nearly 9,000 participants of all ages, youngsters visited Montana's first urban fishing site in Miles City more than 1,000 times.

- FWP, through its Shooting Range Enhancement Program, granted \$119,300 to seven Montana towns to improve local shooting opportunities.